GOLDEN JUBILEE SERMONS

PREACHED ON SEPTEMBER 30, 1962 —
THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
CORNER STONE LAYING.

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH,
DARBY, PENNSYLVANIA.

"THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM"

A SERMON PREACHED IN ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, DARBY, PENNSYLVANIA,
BY THE RECTOR, THE REV. E. CARL SANDIFORD,
ON "GOLDEN JUBILEE SUNDAY", SEPTEMBER 30th, 1962.

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me."
--Saint Matthew 18:4, 5.

Although yesterday was Saint Michael & All Angels' Day, and today the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity, we use the Collect, Epistle, Gospel and colour for Saint Michael's Day today at eleven (having used those for Trinity XV at eight), because, in 1912, Saint Michael's Day fell on Sunday, and it was on that day, as you know, that Bishop Rhinelander presided and laid the Stone of the Corner of this beautiful building.

Last evening, we enjoyed an unusually fine Parish Dinner--and the company of many people who once were members here, but who have now moved on to other areas. It was the sort of event which will remain in our collective memories for many a year. It was very fitting and thoroughly pleasant--and it was also a prime example of many hands and minds making possible that which a few could not have managed.

This afternoon, we will celebrate in another way--we will re-enact, and thus re-live, in a way, the ceremonies of the Corner Stone itself. This, too, will be a notable event, and a time of great rejoicing.

The schedules of the Bishops are too full of the making of new Christians in Holy Confirmation, to permit them to do as much as they would like to do of this sort of spiritual reminiscing--but they will be duly represented by their Administrative Assistant, the Reverend Alfred Vail, successor to the beloved Reverend Dr. Charles H. Long. Again, this aspect of our Golden Jubilee Celebration is indeed fitting and highly beneficial to our morale.

But, just as the Altar Cross stands out boldly between the two vases of beautiful white flowers, and the two burning candles -- as it symbolizes so much more of the spiritual significance of ANY day - so does this moment of the actual Presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ in our midst, touch us in a special and inimitable way, as we humbly and quietly offer at His Altar our profound thanks for all He has accomplished in our midst during this half-century...and most especially His one eternal great gift of Himself, as our Redeemer, our eternal Sacrifice, our everlasting Great High Priest.

If our anniversary celebration were composed ENTIRELY of the fun and fellowship of last evening, and the historical commemoration of this afternoon, there would be a great spiritual GAP in our observance --for this EUCHARIST, this time of joyful re-offering of ourselves, soul and body, to the service of Christ, is also our most special time and opportunity of offering our most humble and hearty thanks for this establishment, and all which has been done here.

If the social and historical aspects of this day were ALL, it would be treacherously easy for us to fall prey to the grave sin of spiritual pride in our predecessors and their and our accomplishments. Such, I feel sure, is NOT our intention. If it IS, then God help us to see our error and amend our ways!!

Just as there is a great contrast between spiritual pride and the humility which Christ seeks to nurture in us, so also there is great contrast between the Epistle and the Gospel for Saint Michael's Day. The Epistle tells of great heroism in the war Saint John saw in heaven in his prophetic trance. The Gospel, on the other hand, tells us that he who shall be GREATEST in the kingdom of heaven will be the one who possesses the true humility best exemplified by the trusting love of a little child. When Our Lord gave such an answer to His questioners, who had been intent upon doing great things for Him in order to obtain high places in the heavenly heirarchy, they must have been considerably shocked, perhaps disappointed.

But Our Lord's assertion was true. It is NOT in the GREAT events and occasions of life that the character God would have us have is developed. It is in the treadmill of day-by-day life that character is produced -- in life's LITTLE joys and sorrows, victories and defeats, periods of well-being and illnesses. In the LITTLE temptations come our trials!

NOW is the time for us to examine our record of failure or success in the DAILY life of the Church put here on this hill to bear witness to the love of God. Have we made this an institution which brings to the minds of those who pass by an image of strength or weakness in the Faith-witness? Is its purpose here clear in the minds of those not of our fold living near us? Or are we just "the question-mark over on the corner"? ARE we seeking to be the "leaven in the loaf" mentioned in the Easter canticle? Leaven is SMALL, proportionate to the whole mass, but leaven is NOT weak, or inactive, or indedisive. Are we, in the LITTLE days, being the kind of examples of the love of God that we are on special Feast Days, such as today?

It isn't nearly so hard for us to witness, by our own physical numbers, augmented by our visitors, today, as it will be in the plain, ordinary days which will surely follow this one. Can our neighbours see in us the kind of faith, humility and trusting love to be seen in the little child of whom Our Lord spoke in the Gospel? Or do they see in us the petty pride which is the ultimate mark of spiritual immaturity?

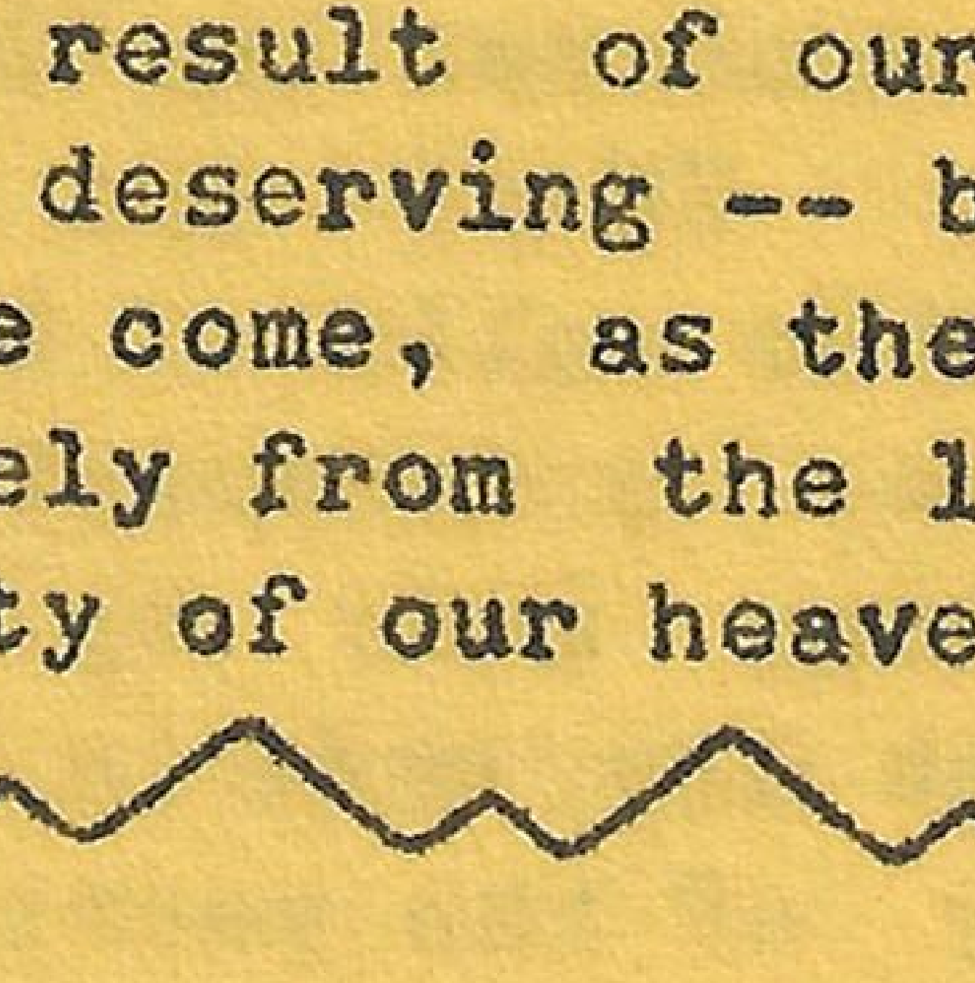
Today isn't the time to completely answer all these questions, but let us take them to heart, not taking false pride in the favourable answers, but, rather, making earnest resolutions to CHANGE the embarrassing answers.

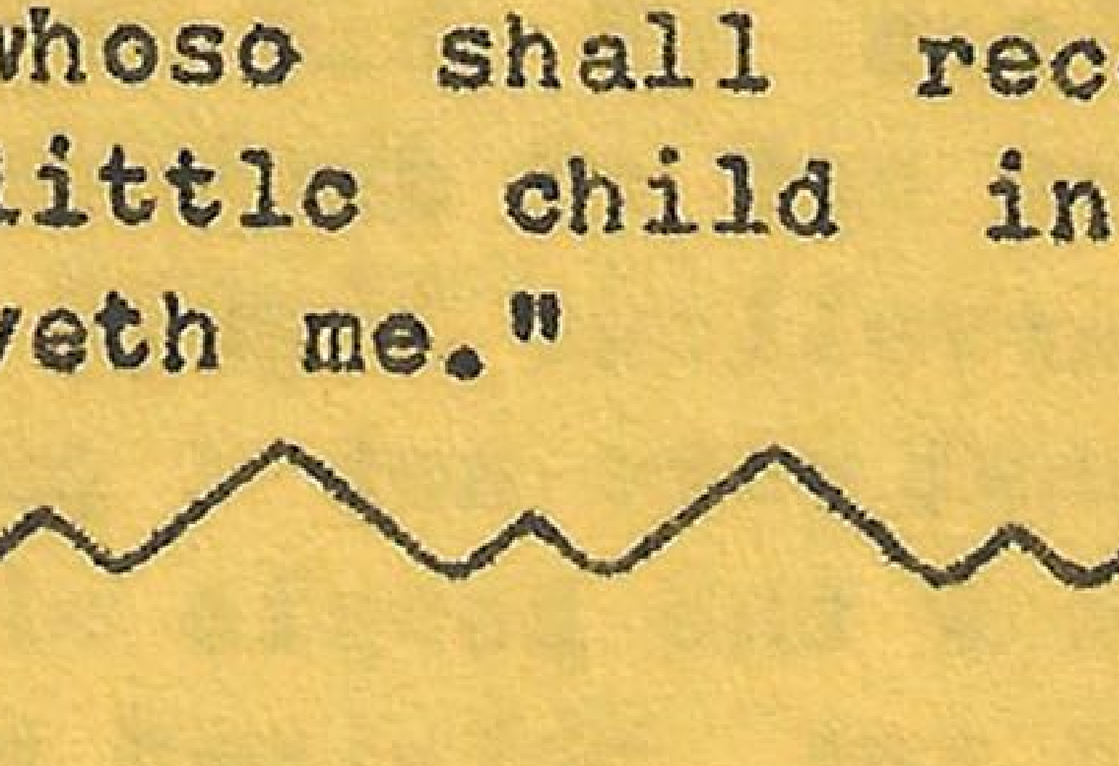
Let us realize today, above all, that the good gifts God has given us during the past half-century have come not as the result of our goodness or our deserving -- but that they have come, as they always do, purely from the loving generosity of our heavenly Father.

Christ has made it plain that it is in our LITTLE victories that the character He desires will be formed--and that the opposite end will be achieved, if the LITTLE victories become little DEFEATS because of any feeling of false pride, or "superiority", which they may bring.

Our only assurance of retaining our collective humility is in the continual offering of humbly devout praise and thanksgiving.....which it is now our purpose to do. In such offerings do we discover the greatness of God's love.....and the desire and ability to manifest it to the community and to the world at large.

For "...whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me."





"STONES AND THE FAITH"

A SERMON PREACHED IN ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, DARBY, PENNSYLVANIA,
BY THE REVEREND ALFRED VAIL, REPRESENTING THE BISHOPS, AT THE
RE-ENACTMENT OF THE LAYING OF THE CORNER STONE, 50 YEARS AFTER.

From the First Epistle General of Saint Peter, in the Second Chapter: "Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner. And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."

Christian people, receiving their heritage from the older dispensation of Judaism, have always been a people of history --a people who are concerned with the history of the world, a people who are concerned to notice what happens in time, and to set aside the notice of what has taken place.

Some of you may have read, in this morning's NEW YORK TIMES, an article which gives a description of a team of students from Harvard University and Cornell University, who have been excavating in the city of Sardis, the ancient city of Sardis, in western Turkey, the city where King Croesus was supposed to have reigned. This team of excavators found there in that city a marble slab, and on this slab was pictured the Menorah, or the seven-branched candlestick of the Synagogue. Also a tree (I know not whether it is the Acacia, or what tree it is, but I have an idea that this is what might be symbolized); the Shophar, or ram's horn, used to announce the Jewish New Year. There are inscriptions on the walls of this ancient place, commemorating pious donations made by the people of that day, made in the Third Century of the years of Our Lord, the Third Century Anno Domini. Also commemorated there was the social status of the donors. One was a city counsellor. There were two jewelers who were obviously named in this group of ancient Jews who built the Synagogue in Sardis. There were glass vessels, bronze jugs and weights, bronze coins and many other tokens that were left to tell the story of by-gone years.

Some of you here today were

at the place of the Laying of the CORNER STONE when it was put into this building. Probably placed with the CORNER STONE were records of some sort or other. This is the usual case. I do not know what was put in the CORNER STONE of this building. Some of you may know.

I have been part of one CORNER STONE laying in a Church in this Diocese, and I know some of the things that were put into that CORNER STONE. There were put in and sealed for history, put in and sealed so that when time takes the building and the building goes, somebody studying later, may find out who lived here, who worshipped here, who had an interest in this edifice. In the CORNER STONE that I saw laid, there was a Cross put in, a Holy Bible and a Book of Common Prayer, and a record of the history of the Parish, a list of the names of every person in the Parish Church of that time. But more than this, there was one token that was placed in that CORNER STONE that I will never forget as long as I live: It was the silver dollar that had been carried in the pocket of the Sexton of the Church, who, as a young man, coming to this country from England, had begun his work with the Pennsylvania Railroad, and, the first dollar he earned, he had carried throughout his lifetime. He carried it in his pocket. And when he retired from the Pennsylvania Railroad, as a member of the Congregation, he offered to be the Sexton, to take care of the building that he loved. And when we built an addition to the building, a new part of what was started before his time, he wanted to give his treasured pocket-piece to go into that CORNER STONE. I believe this was a worthy offering, something that will make history when that CORNER STONE may be studied, years hence.

Jews and Christians, then, have always been an historical people. We have been a people who take note; we mark certain places; we set them aside. Beth El - the place where God first was worshipped by the people, the chosen people of God. The Temple was set aside by the Israelites as a central focus for all the worship of Israel.

We also set aside events. You know, history is always a setting-aside of events. If you were to pick up and read two different histories of, say, a time such as the War Between the States, or Civil War, if you were to see a history book written by someone from South of the Mason-Dixon Line, it might say something different. There would be a different emphasis than in one written by those North of the Mason-Dixon Line. Events are set aside, they are remembered, in different ways.

And so people set aside the events of the call of Abraham, that when Abraham was called to leave his family, and to leave his native country of

Horan, in Ur of the Chaldes, and to leave that place, the event was noted. The people remembered and set this aside, and said, "God called him." Possibly others noted the event with hardly any notice. They passed it off as saying, "These people have gone on their way, and they've left our community --but, so what?" The people of Abraham, the Jewish Nation, chose to remember to set this event aside as something special - that God had called them into this historical event.

And so it was, many years later, after the people had been taken captive, and had lived with the Egyptians, and had become assimilated into the culture of the Egyptian people, and were fast losing their heritage; and again an event was noted and set aside, and the event was that God called Moses to go down into that land, and to again lead the people out--to lead the people of God out of Egypt, into the land that had been promised to them by God many years earlier.

We are a people of history. We set events aside. We note the events.

Following, and in close parallel to, the event of the Exodus of the people of Israel, was the story of the leading of the people out of sin. When the people of God were led out of sin, into the everlasting relationship with God---Salvation! And this happened in time, in a certain event, in the event that was noted as the Crucifixion of the Man Jesus Christ, Who, when He had been buried, rose from the dead, and was noted as the Person of Salvation, the Messiah of Israel, the Leader of the people of God --the chief CORNER STONE of the Church.

The people of God always set aside people. Abraham was noted; and Isaac; and Jacob. Jacob's name was set aside when it changed from Jacob, the cheat who stole his brother's birthright, when he became Israel, the Captain of the people of God.

There were many prophets, and priests, and kings; and, finally, the chief CORNER STONE --Christ, the Lord.

We are a people of history, and we are also a people of the Sacraments. Outward and visible signs speak to us in a way that nothing else does. And so we set aside certain things to say something to us. And the people in this Parish Church set aside, on the corner of this building, as you enter the nave, a STONE.

A CORNER STONE is set aside and marked and specially noted. And yet, there is a danger in this sort of thing. If symbols and things are set aside and become too important, they become idols, and they become things of magic. They lose their religious significance and become things of the devil. A CORNER STONE should never lose its significance!! What it speaks to is something over and above itself as a MERE STONE.

A CORNER STONE must be like the TOUCHSTONE. A TOUCHSTONE is a flint-like substance that was used to detect the fineness of gold alloys. It was used to scratch against precious metal -- to see if it measured up to the standards of the precious metal. A TOUCHSTONE reveals the nature and quality of a thing.

There is also another kind of STONE that has taken a great prominence in the history of the world, and, as a matter of fact, as we go into the space age, we are beginning to understand the magnetic fields around our earth a great deal more than people understood them many centuries ago. But when magnetism was first noted, it came in a peculiar kind of a STONE called the LODESTONE. The Chinese, many centuries ago, used the LODESTONE to make the compass. It had magnetic powers, powers of attraction. And so, from the LODESTONE, came the term "Lodestar", or guiding star. The LODESTONE gives a sense of direction.

And then, in Pennsylvania, we are all conscious of another Kind of STONE--a KEYSTONE. The name, "The Keystone State", came to us because we were the seventh of the thirteen states in the original Union. There were six states on each side of Pennsylvania, and so this arch was held together by the KEYSTONE, and this was the name given to our state. The KEYSTONE completes the arch. It locks the members together. It is the key to the arch.

And then the CORNER STONE, of which we are speaking: The CORNER STONE traditionally unites two walls of a building. It brings together the parts of the building into a wholeness. I would say to you today, that the CORNER STONE is an outward and visible symbol which gives all of the implications contained in the TOUCHSTONE, and the LODESTONE, and the KEYSTONE. There is a unity in the CORNER STONE, when it is rightly understood, pointing to that unity which is in Christ.

Chirst is the TOUCHSTONE; Christ is the standard for all Christians. We are called to be saints; we are called to be the persons God meant us to be --to grow up into the likeness and the fullness and the stature of Christ. We must measure against the standard of Christ.

Christ is also the LODESTONE for us. Christ is the guide!! Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is the way out of Horan to Canaan. He is the way out of Egypt. He is the cloud by day and the fire by night. He leads us out of sin into life eternal. Christ is the guide. Christ is the attraction, the LODESTONE for

Christians.

Christ is also the KEYSTONE. He is the completion of the arch. He is the Alpha and the Omega. He is the One Who brings the members together. He is the CORNER STONE. Christ is the unity. He is that in the Communion ("He with us, and we with Him"), that brings us all together.

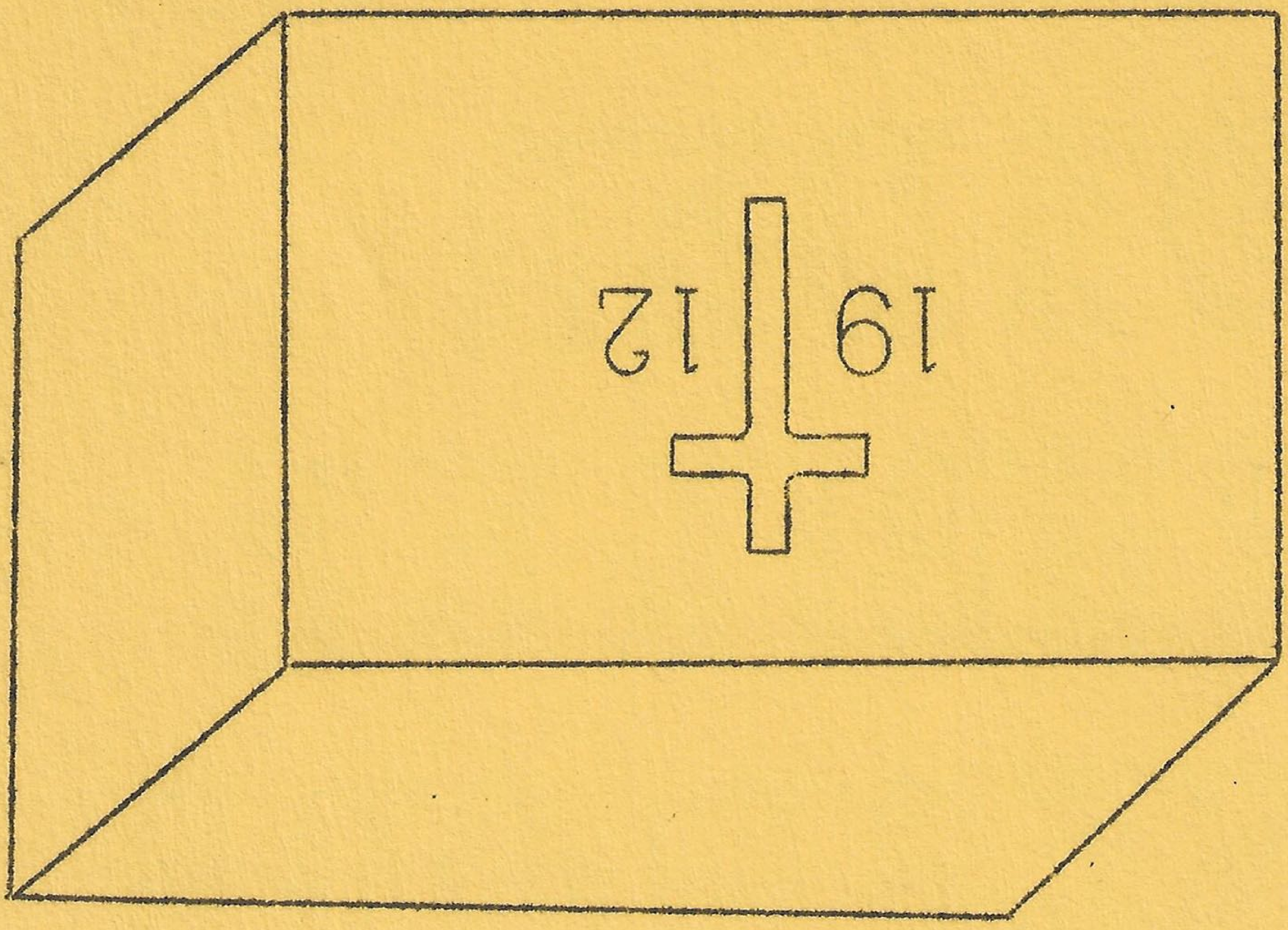
When I was asked to come here by your Rector, I asked your Rector if he had something special he wanted me to say to you this afternoon--whether or not there were any special problems in this Parish Church to which he would like me to address myself. Your Rector said, in his genial way, "No, I guess we just have the normal kind of sins that any other Parish has." And I know that you realize just how he said this. And there is a tremendous amount of real understanding in this statement.

We here in this Parish Church have just as many sins today as the people in Mississippi have, and the problems we see in history which is now being made in our country--today and tomorrow --a time when the forecasters are saying--such as one announcer said last night on the radio --that we are looking for the possibility that Fort Sumpter will be played again.

History is being made, not only in Mississippi: It is being made here, by every single individual soul on this earth, and in this Parish. But, whether or not it becomes meaningful, sacred history, whether or not it becomes something that is set aside, and your names will go down in the history of the people of God, is up to you. Because, wherever you live, into whatever situation you are called, you have the possibility that Abraham had as he left the town of Horan, you have the possibility of joining with those Israelites who chose to move out of Egypt (and, of course, many stayed), or you have the right to choose, as many did, throughout all of the history of Israel, to fall away from the people of God, because there were kings and prophets and teachers that were constantly telling the people, "Come back into this relationship with God," and yet some of the people chose constantly to fall away.

And in the beginning, and in the end, both together, Christ was "the Alpha and the Omega." He IS the beginning and the end. And all of the unity that we have must be the unity in Him, because all else falls away. There is not one who stayed with Him. He died alone. And all, Peter and James and John, and, in the end, they all left Him. But He rose from the dead, and He reached out, and called us back.

We choose to note that we are called back. We are called back in this period of time to be His people--the people of God here in the Borough of Darby!



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